

Byron Wille Interview 2/14/02

1. Where was your home town?

Williams, IA Wife Evelyn was present. Lived in same house all my life.

1a. Your age when you enrolled?

19-1935

2. What did you do before going to the CCC Camp?

Herded cattle, mowed cemetery, and worked at a gas station for \$1/day. During the winter I would clean the walks. Runner for NW Bell Telephone Company.

3. Why did you enroll in the CCC program?

Make something out of myself and help pay for family expenses.

4. What CCC camps were you assigned to?

Boone(Ledges SP) #2723

5. Were you ever transferred? Why?

To Red Oak in 1936, to work on soil erosion problems.

6. When did you work at the Camp? (Dates)

Boone 1935(150 men), Red Oak 1936(More than Boone).

7. Tell me about your first days at the camp, i.e., clothing, equipment, toiletries issued, etc.

Signed up at Webster City and went to Boone and received clothes(WW1 Surplus), pants, shirts. Had a store in the camp to but toiletries. The CCC men had to buy the toiletries themselves.

8. What personal items did you have when you arrived?

None, just the clothes on him.

9. What were you not allowed to keep?

None.

10. How were you billeted (assigned lodging)?

Barracks, they just put us somewhere. Sometimes we would run out of coal and would go cut wood and burn it for fuel.

10a. Describe the type of shelter you slept in?

Wood barracks with a separate shower house.

10b. Who supplied your bedding and sleepwear?

Government issued.

11. Who were your bunkmates?

Most are dead. Delmac Culow and Donald Phillips(bunkmates)were in contact years ago.

12. Tell me about the food in the mess hall.

Good. Guys went on strike once because of the food, but that was quickly fixed.

13. Who did the cooking?

CCC, mess Sargent did menus.

14. How were your holiday meals?

X-mas turkey. He liked watermelon.

15. When was payday?

1st of month, \$25/month sent to family and kept \$5 for cash.

16. How much were you paid?

\$5/month.

17. How did you spend your pay?

Shows, beer or two, smokes and dances.

18. What were your days off, and how did you spend them?

Dances, shows. Didn't get to church in Boone.

19. How was the Sabbath observed in camp?

Went to Red Oak for church.

20. Tell me about he sports activities in the camp.

Played softball and boxing.

21. What part did you take in them?

See above.

22. Tell me about any personal conflicts you had, and how you dealt with them?

Had a couple of fights.

23. What types of discipline were used to punished rule breakers?

KP duty. Officer would take care of discipline problems. (some stealing took place)

24. I understand there were some educational/trade opportunities available. Did you take advantage of any of these? How?

Some could do High School/other trades. Did attend cooking school.

25. Who were your teachers?

Don't recall.

26. Where were classes held?

At Camp.

27. What benefits did you get out of these classes at camp or after leaving camp?

Ran a restaurant in Jewell, Iowa for Tom Burgers.

28. What were some of the main projects your camp was involved in?

Ledges SP cut grape vines and plant them other places.

29. What were some of your duties?

Cut vines, pick up trash, cook, trail building.

30. What type of skills did you receive?

Learned to cook.

31. Who trained you (LEMs)?

Bill Noble taught him to cook, he was a French chef.

32. Who were your leaders?

Above.

33. How did you get along with them?

Good.

34. How did you get your work assignments each day?

Shift work on cook duty, the leaders told him what to do. Cooking shift was 8-9 hours long.

35. What type of equipment did you use? How was it issued to you?

Tool house, the individual was responsible for returning the tools.

36. Who were some of your fellow workers, and how did you get along with them?

Has pictures with names of them. Got along OK.

37. What contact, if any, have you had with any of your fellow CCC workers?

Did used to keep in touch with Don Phillips. None now.

38. How did the city kids and the country kids get along at camp?

OK

39. Were there any minority groups, i.e. African Americans, Hispanic, Native American, or others, working at the camp?

No.

40. How were they treated by their superiors?

N/A

41. How were they treated by their fellow workers?

N/A

42. Tell me about the specific skills you learned in camp.

Cooking, shoveling dirt.

43. How did these benefit you after leaving the camp?

Opened a restaurant in Jewell that he ran.

44. Were there any injuries at work?

Occasionally there were injuries at work.

45. How were these injuries taken care of?

Doctors in camp.

46. Were you ever injured? How?

No.

47. What diseases occurred in camp, and how were these treated?

Measles, I think.

48. Tell me about any insect & rodent problems?

None.

49. What work, if any, did you do outside the camp, or in the community during your CCC days?

Worked off site, but it was CCC work.(Cutting and rooting trees at local school.)

50. Were you paid?

None.

51. What contacts did you have with the outside community?

Yes, American Legion WW1 vets from Council Bluffs.

52. What fellowship type organizations, i.e., Masonic, Elks, Odd Fellows, did you or any of the camp workers attend at camp, or in the community?

Masonic Lodge in Red Oak, did not attend. Did attend American Legion Vets in the CCC.

53. Would you tell me about any contacts you had with females during your stay at the camp?

Yes, dated a girl that was an usher in theatre, went to dances in Dickyville (around Red Oak).

54. Were there any problems with other young men in the local community?

Yes, we had some fights, probably insulted the CCC men.

55. How do you think the members of the CCC camp were felt about by the local community?

Business liked/respected the CCC. Not much trouble with locals.

56. What is your most memorable experience at the CCC camp?

None.

57. What was your oddest experience at the camp?

None.

58. What do you think was your biggest accomplishment at the camp?

Learning to do the kitchen/cooking work.

59. How do you think your life was changed, by enrolling in the CCC?

Worth a lot to me, made a large impact to his life.

60. What did you do after leaving the CCC?

After Red Oak moved to Hartly, IA to learned the plumbers trade. Then due to family problems moved to Ft. Dodge and met Tom Burger and then went to Jewell to run café and helped uncle sell pans. He got ill at Jewell, after recovered went to Williams to work in local grocery store(3 years). Then became a postal clerk (15 years), then became a mail carrier in Williams for 20 years. In 1943 was drafted into Army when he was a postal clerk. Was located at Italy in infantry division and served for almost 3 years and was wounded. In 1947 was married.